

THE SHIP OF SAND

Drawings by D. S. Hutchison

BY S. TEN EYCK BOURKE AND CHARLES FRANCIS BOURKE



"Work out your salvation your own way; but don't speak ill of the dead. She's a ship o' sand long ago."

She's bowlin' out o' Forty
For to bury up her bones,
When the east wind's whangin'
She is bound for Davy Jones—
Down, down, down to Davy Jones!
—SONG OF THE OLD SEA WAGON

LITTLE TOM WELSH, line gunner of Ships Bottom Life Saving Station, the crack crew of the Barnegat Bay Division, was indulging in song, marking time to the boom of "Old Ocean," as he posted up the latest official bulletin on the "train despatcher's" chart that hung on the wall of the little life saving station,—a record of coastwise maritime traffic that all good life savers must study to know with what they may have to deal, live ships or dead ships.

"Bowlin' out o' Forty, for to bur-ee," rasped the little gunner. "Down, down, down to Davy Jones!"

The grim old chantey fitted the gunner's mood and the day, weepy, with sullen skies, in the bated breath of the Howling Forties. For days now the hammer-headed levanter had been shrieking ship murder out of the east,—that ominous east of the equinox, shrouded in eternal mysteries of ships and sailormen, as the shifting sea smoke shrouded the fog-bound coast of Barnegat,—and the wind-lashed seas, with huge combers that flailed the murderous Gridiron reefs, graveyard of shipping, like minute guns through the send of the surf, gave promise of more to come.

Welsh shook his head gloomily as he spelled out the brief notice, ordinarily a ship's obituary—and in this weather!

Reported lost or sunk at sea—clipper ship Mandarin, Captain Cane, out of Shanghai, with silks and oriental goods for New York. Last spoken south of Bermuda. Search coast for survivors or wreckage.

"An' that Mandarin clipper reported overdue fourteen days an' fourteen nights lost off Barnegat, an' nary sign o' wreckage along the beach to show for her! 'Tain't to be expected we'll hear from her nor anybody on her, Jam," he said with somber finality as the life Captain came in from the adjacent boathouse, where the rest of the crew forgathered, on "waiting watch."

The hull of the storm had brought no surcease of watchfulness for Captain Jem Casco and his eight brawny surfmen, who lay ready with line gun and rocket, boat and breeches buoy, for whatever the tossing seas of the big wash might cast up on the shore. For Ships Bottom was wise in the way of the wrecking winds, and that the equinox would loose itself with new-gathered strength they knew from long experience.

"That's right, Tommy," Casco agreed. "Sides, this double header's on'y holdin' its breath a purpose to come back fresh an' finish a man-size job. What's comin' better be on their way!"

THE falling dusk brought confirmation of the big Captain's prophecy. It was a night of elemental fury that set in, when Bermuda was reported blown off the map, and thousand-foot express liners fled shrieking from the ship lanes. The Laughing Devil coast, grinning from the chart of Barnegat's forty-mile sandy breakwater, was a foaming surge of flotsam and jetsam, the jackstraws of shipping, splintered in the ravaging jaws of the sea monster.

It was blowing on Barnegat; the storm riders were garnering a toll that taxed the full strength of Ships Bottom's sister stations. So far the murderous Gridiron, clutching treacherous reef tenacles into the coastwise ship lane, had been cheated of prey. But routine was on wartime footing and effective, with Casco on watch in the lookout tower, where he couldn't see the

churning, white-crested surf from the white station,—a night to go by sailors' sense and dead reckoning alone.

ABOUT eight bells Casco's professional instincts, alert, clamoring for action, leaping out to meet inspiration from the void, like a static warning of the wireless, sent the big life Captain in two jumps from the tower to his slickers, shouting orders with a bull's bellow.

"Something in the offing, Boys! I ain't seen her—but jump the hurry-up boat!" the big keeper boomed. "We're due out!"

The watching crew, sea-booted and sou'westered, bolted for the white lifeboat. They were men of the sea's moods, these Barnegat boatmen. They knew the call of the castaway. And the powerful, forty-horse sea fighter stormed out into the smother—to pick up a drenched and delirious derelict "sloshing round" in a swamped ship's boat, almost in reaching distance of the Gridiron's jagged toothed rocks, which had grilled many a good ship, but for some reason had just missed this cockleshell.

"Just nicked 'im in time!"

"For Gawd's sake, Bullies—look!" Casco's shout capped Welsh's cry, as the little gunner dragged the dripping castaway over the side. It brought the crew upstanding, staring at the name on the bow of the ship's boat, just as it sank from sight in the furious seas:

MANDARIN—SHANGHAI

And back at Ships Bottom Station an official bulletin proclaimed the Mandarin, full rigger out of the East, her Captain, mate, and Chinese crew, lost a fortnight before—her wreckage strewn the seas!

Casco, straddling the sternsheets, stared down at this other colossus of the sea with unbelieving eyes. This man, steel muscled and weather tanned, battered and bruised by the elements almost to unconsciousness, wore pulled jauntily down over what seemed a powder burn on the temple a cap that bore the tarnished title "Mate."

"Mate—he's the mate o' the Mandarin! A fortnight adrift?"

It was no time nor place to ask questions, out at sea with the storm howling behind the white lifeboat, which bored inshore through the churning seas like a drowned submarine, coming up only occasionally to breathe.

But back at Ships Bottom they learned his name and something of what he had endured, burning with fever of a shot wound, without food or water, disabled and alone, on that tossing inferno of endless slaty seas. Only—Jack Carney, survivor of the Mandarin, had never spent a fortnight in an open boat, bad as his case was!

"Three days? The man's been adrift on'y three days!" It was one of many discrepancies in the grim tale that Casco and the life crew patched out from the babble of delirium that came from a bunk in the rear room of the little station, where so many secrets of the sea had been told—and held sacred.

"Fool! Fool! Fool!" Carney grated, his voice raucous as a gray gull's wail in the storm. "One man's word against another, you say, Cap'n Cane—mate against skipper? You're wrong, Cap'n Cane! It's you against the ship you mistreated,—the Mandarin's parts are numbered from truck to keelson, rudder post to figurehead; all with X's and V's, builder's brand. They won't fit any ship but that Mandarin. And you chucked 'em all—along with that yellow image of a Chinnee, made o' wood, Skipper Cane! Wilful wrecking, woeful reckoning!"

The sick man's eyes were like electrics. He was living

over the past with terrible fidelity, aboard that ship with its two white men, mate and skipper, and the Chinese crew, clawing and swarming everywhere, like monkeys, chattering in their strange tongue. Jack Carney, mate of the Mandarin, had cast back over time itself and a hundred miles of storm-swept ocean to recite his story of a Shylock skipper who sheared his ship in twain, planning to garner reward for loss that never occurred,—barratry so strange it was unbelievable.

"That's where you fooled yourself, Captain Cane," he trailed on between chuckles. "That smug-faced Mandarin won't be satisfied till he's back on her bows again, mark me! He'll call her out o' the sea—every sailor knows a ship will come back where she lost herself. And you left more than you took—her soul an' me. Two things you'd ought to done, Cap'n Cane,—you'd ought to kep' me barred down below, or shot and killed! That's the on'y way you could stop me talkin', or doing—"

"Seem to have that Chinnee figgerhead on the brain," Little Welsh remarked. "Like that wooden idol was behind that cur'us wreckin'."

"Anyway, he had a row with the skipper. He's got the powder mark to show for it. If the man was sane, I'd say the skipper had a game on," Long Johnson said. The long surfman had sailed deep water, and knew oriental owners and the temptations that beset the paths of merchant skippers.

Casco shook his head. "No sane man'd take chances on losing a ship with as val'able cargo as the Mandarin carried. The insurance wouldn't equal the profits of the voyage, let alone the value of the ship herself, if something did go wrong."

SUDDENLY he bent over the sick man, speaking slowly and solemnly, as a man who puts the final test. The whole crew was watching the square-jawed young sailor's face, the fever fading from it with the dawn that grayed the boathouse and the station on the beach.

"Carney," the life Captain said, "near as we know the Mandarin was wrecked with all hands, sunk at sea. Why wasn't the rest in the boat with you? How did you come to go clear?"

"I just told you," the answer came fretfully. "Cane shot me when I wouldn't stand for his wreckin' her, an' locked me in the cabin. I took a chance and jumped the ship—"

"How?" Casco asked in a voice of doom.

"In the boat, of course! They were all busy with the wreck, Chinks and all, and we wasn't far off land. I sculled clear in the fog. Next I knew the ship was all around me. Cap'n Cane ought to burnt that. It'll all fit in where it belongs,—spars and topworks and figurehead,—all he cut off her. 'Cause she ain't sunk—she'll come back for 'em—bury her bones—"

The voice trailed off pitifully whimpering. But the sympathy of Ships Bottom dissolved with the morning mist.

"Come back, will she?" Little Welsh snarled. "So will an old sojer with a wooden leg! The coward quit 'em when they was fighting it, Chinks and all! Likely that's how he got shot,—skipper tryin' to stop him gettin' away. Gawd knows why he was let come through! What?"

"What gets me," Casco said somberly, "what was that Mandarin doing all the time she was getting lost? What made 'em chop off that Chinnee figgerhead? Looks to me like unnecess'ry mut'lacion, if it wasn't honest wrecking. Carney's badly mixed."

"He on'y says they did it," Little Welsh growled. "I might a believed he was marooned, if he'd left out that

yarn o' the wooden Mandarin. Why, any skipper'd be scared o' turning his Chink crew on him, chopping that off!"

IT was a case for the Inspector. But five minutes' grilling of the department official, coming from headquarters on Sandy Hook to investigate, left the ex-mate without a leg to stand on. The revenue man was a maritime martinet; Carney was sick. Facts the department wanted, and poor Carney was dazed, still off balance. The iron-jawed Inspector could not swallow the superstitious rigmarole of the young sailor, recited in all simplicity of the sea, but stumbling sadly. Growling like an old sea dog that he was, the Inspector delivered sentence:

"I let him talk; but one thing would convict the man. Here's the ship Morning Star arrived yesterday, with a charter out of China ports. She reports passing the wreckage of the Mandarin at sea, down to her Chinese figurehead,—a total loss, if ever a ship was,—smashed, swamped, and gone to the bottom. Where else is she? A ship swept clean to the water line that nobody's seen since, and never was rerigged anywhere!" he snapped. "And here comes along this yellow-streak mate, right on the heels of that, with a cock-and-bull yarn to save himself, about the Mandarin being still afloat; implying that the skipper had sheared off all her topworks and spars, and set 'em adrift to simulate a wreck that never occurred! Why, the man's mad!"

The fortnight during which the Mandarin had dropped from sight struck no man as vital. Carney marched out of Ships Bottom Life Saving Station a discredited man. So far as the department was concerned, the case was closed.

But Jack Carney, deep-water sailorman, had fought the sea from his youth: he was not the man "to face his finish" tamely. The case was not closed for Jack Carney, by any means! Hardly begun!

If Ships Bottom had judged rightly, if Carney had fabricated this yarn of false shipwreck to cover his own cowardice, if the mate of the Mandarin had jumped his ship in the yawl that was made ready for them all in case of emergency, leaving his Captain and the Chinese crew to perish; then exposure and suffering from the wound in his head had unhinged his brain, had confirmed in him conviction in the tale the incredulous lifemen scouted.

Even the wreckage of the full-rigger the easterly gale was bringing in daily—he knew it well, every spar and spike of it—could not daunt him. He piled it up on the beach, flotsam and jetsam from the missing Mandarin, determined to make it prove his case—when the ship came back to her own. His belief never wavered. The obsession of the deep-sea sailorman possessed him. He was certain that somewhere a ship that had been the Mandarin was afloat, certain that the ship would return to the spot where her wreckage had been lopped off. It was the law of the sea, known to all sailormen.

Firm in his belief, he settled down to pick up a precarious living on the beach of Barnegat. He knew well how he stood with the men of Ships Bottom; who, since Carney did not break the law, did not interfere with him. If, with the passing of time, pretty Annie Thomas,

whose brother was operator at the government wireless, chose to believe in the big silent mate who was fighting his battle out there alone—why, Carney couldn't complain that the world was all against him. It only meant that it was up to him to prove that the girl's trust was not misplaced.

Once, meeting Casco alone on patrol, he had flared out about the simulated shipwreck,—how Captain Cane's ship was not sinking when he (Carney) was forced for other reasons to leave her, barely with his life; that the Mandarin was in commission that very day, sailing the seas under a different name. For her hull, at least, was afloat.

Big Jim silenced him sternly. "Tell no man that ghost story again, if you would stay on Barnegat beach, Jack Carney!" he growled. "Work out your salvation your own way; but don't speak ill of the dead. She's a ship o' sand long ago, an' her crew and her skipper on bottom."

A ship of sand! Carney caught the illuminating thought on the bound. He would build a ship on the sand, and in it he would assemble all the lost and branded timbers! If anything would call back the Mandarin, it would be the better half of herself,—all the superstructure of the ship that he believed Captain Cane had purposely discarded and left behind; the wreckage that had drifted in, almost all but the bare hull. He hadn't thought of that when he raked the beach clean of her bones. Now he saw a way to make use of those bones, topworks and spars alike. He piled up the bulwarks and beams and rudder post about the deserted fish shanty he had appropriated to his own use, piecing out this skeleton of a stage ship with cordage and canvas and shrouds cast up by the sea.

Builded on sand, it was as if the ghost ship's hull was buried in the sand. Broken spars he used for the hull-less ship's masts; he even found a flange of the Mandarin's old rudder. Finished in miniature, the replica of the lost Mandarin needed only the body of the ship to make her whole. As it stood, it might have been the upper half of the three-master sliced horizontally in two, on the deck line; on the serrated surface of the sand the ship appeared floating on the rippling waves. All that remained to set in place was the yellow wooden figure of the grinning Chinese Mandarin—and Carney, grimly patient, waited only the coming of the missing figurehead to set the capsheaf to his task, that and the hull and cargo that Cane had saved intact when he threw the rest away, to build upon it again, as Carney believed, a full rigger or a brigantine. But that the transformed hull still sailed the seas he did know in his sailor's soul—and that in time it would seek the other half, chopped away and discarded. This was Carney's "madness."

In intervals, during his labor, while the storm winds were smashing up the coast, the castaway absorbed all the marvelous and mighty methods of the professional life savers. And on a night when chance threw opportunity his way, when the Ships Bottom crew was fighting the Storm King down coast, the disgraced mate of the Mandarin, in the old yawl that had saved him, which he had picked up and patched into some semblance of seaworthiness, put off into the midnight and the gale.

Before Mate Carney got ashore—by the mercy of God and seamanship—he had shown the crew of the Annie T. how to claw their imperiled craft off the murderous Gridiron Reef when it seemed that nothing could save the schooner. Carney saved her, and said nothing when found out. It set Ships Bottom thinking.

IF Jack Carney done what we know he done—well, he got shot and he was touched in the head first off!" "And nobody never did sight that Mandarin's hull," Little Welsh said, in ungrudging admiration. "If she sunk when she was wrecked, she took her masts and topworks with her, w'ich is uncommon, an' don't account for where all that truck come from that Carney fetched in."

Insensibly the mate's proved courage stirred the men of Ships Bottom to sympathy with his dogged determination. They were fighters against odds by trade, and at least they respected a superstition they could not share.

"He's sane enough when he talks about ships calling ships at sea, and sneaking together in a ca'm. I don't no about a wrecked hooker coming back to see where she was drowned; but I've seen ships cuddle up from miles in a Paddy's hurricane, like they had engines working. Time'll tell! And meanwhile," Casco switched the subject abruptly, "the glass is falling like a lump o' lead in a shot tower. Jest listen to her blow! We're in for a howler fit to blow that fool sand ship over in the bay, if she don't blow the other half of her ashore, like Carney's waiting for. You're patrol, Welsh; better post him."

The east wind was moaning with a melancholy sound, as though the sea was struggling to tell its grim secrets, or the souls of dead sailormen were weary of their watery prison house—down among the blind fishes. Little Welsh nodded as he shook down the government Vesuvius, and casually marked up "weeper comin'" on the station log.

"All right, Cap," the gunner said dubiously, "I'll stop in an' tell Jack he can come an' warm his tootsies at our stove; but 'e won't—not him!"

"Why not?" Casco demanded.

"'Cause I see him fishin' out a wooden image seven foot high today. He's found his Chinese Mandarin figurehead at last, Jack Carney has, an' finished up his ship o' sand. W'at I'm waitin' for now," the gunner grinned, "is that there wreck Mandarin to come sailing in our front yard and git under the house that Jack built, where she nacherly belongs—'cording to him."

Welsh went on his way, and Casco climbed to the lookout tower, thinking hard. There had been plenty of people to laugh at Carney's folly; but Ships Bottom did not laugh—and it was not entirely for what the mate had done. The fixed conviction of the castaway had got in the coastguards' blood. Carney was neither a fool nor a coward. If they had been wrong about that, maybe he was right about the Mandarin.

IT was like a shadow that hung over Ships Bottom, a strange prescience of something pending that held the life Captain on the alert. A sudden clamor below brought him from the tower on the jump, and the message of the beach wire told him that the time for action had come, even before they sighted the ship.

"Big bark coming in, close hauled, in the teeth of it! Doin' the hardest to claw off, an' missin' stays reg'lar, Harvey Cedars says," his big voice boomed. "She's the Morning Star that passed the Hook this morning, outward bound. She's been blowed back in her reckonin'. And, Lord! there's a mort o' people on her. Furriners!"

"Bowlin' for to bury up her bones,
Down, down—in—Davy Jones!"

"Who's singin'?" Casco cried angrily. "Confound it! There's ghosts abroad tonight! There it goes again!"

"—bury her bones—
—in Davy Jones—"

They knew it was nothing, no more than the suggestion reflexed on the retina of their brains, from the sudden alarm of the Cedars (the next station south); but it sent those brawny storm fighters staring white faced at each other. Big Jim Casco struggled out of the trance.

"Jump the boat out, Johnny, an' get all set! We'll have to bowl her out through the inlet—reg'lar bone breaker—"

The doomed ship had passed the first life station and reached Ships Bottom with railroad speed. Driven back from the beach by the rollers, they watched her black shape ramming in before it to her journey's end. The men aboard had given up attempts to save her. Her three topmasts were gone; but her square topsail, frozen to the yard, dragged her like a chain cable to the rocks.

"She's gone! The Grid's got her—an' they ain't wagged a finger to save 'emselves! There's Chinks for ye!"

With Casco's cry a cloud of blue-bloused figures swarmed aloft, like bluebottle flies from out the churning vortex below. The black ship lifted. They saw the sheen of a great golden star on her bow; then with the rattle of a giant snare drum she struck the reef. "Wedged fast, that Chinese ship! She's a shot line job, an' we'll need a airplane! Her skipper must be dead!"

There were no white officers in sight, only the bloused crew; and the surfmen knew the helpless ignorance of foreign sailors. But a breeches buoy job it was, and a dozen brawny hands unreeling the hawser, while others set up the line mortar and planted the cable clutch back in the sands. Casco, growling at the ship on the rocks, saw a ghostly figure staggering down from the dunes,—

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"Where's the Mandarin, Cap'n Cane? If you don't confess, the Chinks will!"



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THE SHIP OF SAND

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Carney, who had sighted the wreck from his ship of sand.

The first glance electrified the marooned mate. "I know that ship! You'll never make it, Jem!" he cried, his face flaming in the flaring signal fire. "There's on'y one way,—the boat an' the bowsprit!"

"Stand back!" Casco shoved the mate aside.

The gun erupted at their feet, flailing out the lifeline like an angry snake. But the shot fell short.

"I told ye!" Carney cried, forgetting everything in his savage haste for action. "Cap'n Cane won't come off that Mandarin ship till I haul him off! An' I'll do it, if—"

"Cap'n Cane?" Casco roared. "What in Gawd's name d'ye think she is, that bark?"

In sheer amazement the men of the crew stood frozen.

"I don't care what they call her!" Carney raved. "She's the Mandarin, made over! Ain't that Chinees crew enough for ye? An' her skipper, hiding like a rat! I know that long black hull, that clipper bow. She's the Mandarin, come back!"

"An' that makes three Mandarins!" Gunner Welsh jeered. "One sunk, and one out yon, and one on the sands! Gimme a primer, Johnny. I'll shoot her again f'r luck!"

They shot her again, three times, until Casco, with a yell of fury, kicked over the gun and sprang down to the battling surf. The surfboat, on the sand wagon, stood ready, and as the brawny life savers heaved the machine into the sea Carney was the first to leap aboard after the bowman. His face was set in a mask of hatred and dawning hope. The boat had won the lee of the reef. Over them, as they fought her through it, the long bowsprit swayed like a horizontal pendulum or a scythe, seeking to sweep them from the sea. Like starry eyes, the ship's golden emblems glared at them from her bow,—the clipper bow where Carney had last seen the figure of the yellow Mandarin!

THE life savers had no time to waste on his "ghost story," with the seething maelstrom all around them: their sole desire was to get a line aboard. They remembered only when a clattering block tackle swung sheer from the tip of the flying jibboom that they had a mad sailor aboard.

"Hold hard! I'll make her yet!" Wriggling from Welsh's grip, Carney swarmed up the sheet rope, hand over hand. Far out on the slender spar he stood up, a scowling figure of vengeance, with upraised arm, as though calling down a curse on ship and crew. Ships Bottom, fighting for life in the furious sea, saw the terror of the Chinese, chattering on the top, at the apparition on the bowsprit. It sent a chill through the boat crew.

"I wonder do they know him?" Welsh said. "They're goin' away from him like a ghost—Gawd! He's gone!"

The long jibboom, shaken from its socket, crashed down on the boat. When they struggled free from the tangle of cordage, stunned, swamped, and swept shoreward, Mate Carney of the Mandarin had won aboard, seized a shearing ax, and staggered aft. A ferret-eyed shipmaster cringed before him, and the Chinamen chattered aloft. But Carney's only thought was of all it meant to him to save the ship, and with the lifeboat smashed, out of gun range as the ship was, there was only one way. His acquired knowledge of the business of the beach came handy now. He made for the huge shrouds and stays that held the foremast in place.

"Get that pull off her! She'll swing round and back in the reef channel. The bullies'll get her there!" he panted. "There'll be nothin' for it on'y trolley 'em in—skipper last!"

The fox-faced man had vanished. Rasping orders to the Chinamen in their own familiar speech, Carney buckled to his task. On the sea-washed beach wide-eyed surfmen watched in willing admiration.

"Knows just what to do, that mad mate does," Casco said. "There she comes, tops! an' all! She's switching ends! Hang me if he ain't setting a stays'l on her mizzen! She'll blow in backwards, right on the beach!"

THE drag of the headsails held the ship head on the rocks. Cutting and slashing like a madman, Carney sent mast and sails crashing over the side; then, diving aft the Chinamen, who dared not disobey this devil mate who had suddenly appeared among them, he set a rag of storm trysail. The ship, relieved of the weight on her bow, and forced round by wind and sea, pivoted in her own length, groaning and grating as she made sternway toward the shore.

"An' if that ain't first chop seamanship for you, Jack Carney can have my job!" Big Casco roared. "Now it's our turn, Bullies—hump!"

Bruised and battered as they were, the courage of the indomitable mate roused the life savers to superhuman efforts. The lifeboat, blown in bodily, was a wreck; but the breeches buoy stood ready for business, and they raced it down the beach to meet the shifting position of the wreck. As they toiled the roar of the wind changed from the requiem that had haunted them to a song of triumph, and the surf boomed the refrain: She's howling out o' Forty for to bury up her bones!

Oh, the east wind's whangin', she's bound for Davy Jones—

"Not by a jugful she ain't—not with Jack Carney callin' her so hard!" Little Welsh chortled, as the big boomed Johnnie and the bullies bore down on the big cable of the breeches buoy. High over the maelstrom of surf and rock, the heavy hawser ran to the ship, a vortex of white where she lay, her mast cracking under the strain.

"No ship's mast'd stand that drag long!" Casco said. "Hustle her, Bullies!"

Ships Bottom worked in a frenzy of hurry. Blue-bloused Chinamen were coming from the mizzentop; but Jack Carney had disappeared from the deck, and with him the brass-buttoned skipper. The life savers looked at one another, alarm showing in every weather-beaten face. Some chattering fear other than the peril they had just escaped possessed the oriental sailors too. They answered incoherently, all but speechless from terror, when Casco turned sharply on them.

"That settles it. He's hurt or in trouble. We ain't going to lose him!" Casco snapped, bundling out the last of the Chinese crew.

No ship's mast could stand up under the terrible drag of the hawser and the storm sail, thrashing with the sound of cannon-shots. The call for volunteers was on Casco's lips. Bodily Ships Bottom leaped for the returning "bags" when a hoarse shout went up. They saw Carney rise from the sea smoke with the dazed skipper draped over his shoulder. A long knife slash in his peajacket told what had gone before out on the seawashed deck. But Carney was not thinking of that scratch when he fought his way to the top.

"Heavy score, Skipper Cane!" he murmured. "She's comin' where you got to toe the scratch! Hustle her, Bullies! We ain't over soon!"

The breeches buoy ran out in record time—and time pressed. Big rollers battered the hull, forging farther and farther on the rocks. The long cable looped down, almost to the sea. Clutching his captive, Carney swung off, falling in a sickening swing down the swaying hawser. In the spray of the surf the two men disappeared. The drag on the whip lines brought the life savers up all standing. Then, drenched and dripping, they came out of the sea. The shouting line of men ran back—and the mast of the Morning Star crashed down on the rocks.

"An' if that ain't nip and tuck, I never saw it!" Little Welsh shouted as they dragged the tangled bodies from the surf. "That mad mate has a way of shavin' death and destruction an' carryin' weight. Looks like mebbly Carney's chickens has come home to roost, after all."

"Look, Men, look!" Carney shouted. "Listen!"

MEN were hurrying from the distant beaches,—life savers and Chinamen huddled together; brawny peajacketed men who had cheated the sea; blue-garbed chattering figures, casting evil eyes on the sullen shipmaster. In the gloom of storm and sea smoke the refraction of the driftwood fires cast a ghostly glow over sea and sky. A wail went up from the Chinamen, wild, piercing, chilling the blood of the beach men. The pitch pine flames, leaping higher and higher, picked out strange shapes in the gloom. Out of the shadowy sand dunes, straight in from where the Morning Star had struck, a phantom figurehead leaped from the gloom, a spectral ship plowing out of the darkness with a huge yellow figurehead on her bow,—the figurehead of the Mandarin, magnified in the murk to twice its natural size, glaring vengeance on the oriental crew.

"By George!" Welsh cried. "I didn't know we had worked down to that sand ship o' Carney's. What's the matter with them Chinks?"

Carney knew! The sudden apparition of the Mandarin, ship and figurehead, had terrified the superstitious Chinese, even more than his own unlooked for resurrection. The

time was ripe for action, and he swung on the sullen-faced skipper, dragging him across the beach to where the ship of sand loomed up.

"Where's the Mandarin, Cap'n Cane?" he cried. "That's what I saved you for—where's the Mandarin?"

The skipper looked at him somber eyed. Ships Bottom held its breath.

"It's all up, I tell you!" Carney grated. "I've got all the Mandarin's topworks that washed in—after you dumped 'em into the sea and sailed away, leavin' me behind in the boat. It's all marked and branded so it'll fit into place again." Carney's wrath was rising fast. "Now I ask you where's the Mandarin all that stuff belongs to, figurehead an' all, except the ship herself and her cargo? If you don't confess," Carney cried, pointing to the Chinese crew, "they will!"

THE Chinamen were chattering excitedly,—Pidgin English bracketed with their own guttural tongue,—confession, accusation, promise of amendment,—fearful of the wrath of the Mandarin they had misused. The skipper glanced from the menacing figure that confronted him to the life savers, stern and forbidding. Captain Cane was no fool. He was shaken himself more than he cared to confess, and he was sailor-man enough to know that, with Carney's accusing wreckage and the hull of the Morning Star intact, the former mate would have no difficulty in proving his case, to say nothing of the crew's testimony. He gave a harsh laugh.

"You got me with the goods, I reckon," he said. "The Mandarin—or what was the Mandarin, full rigger—is out there." He pointed to the ship on the rocks. "I doused her yards, an' changed her topworks and her name, and made her the bark Morning Star. It was owners' orders—those confounded Chink owners," the skipper said sulkily. "They wanted to collect insurance on the ship and keep her and her cargo too. They fixed me up with a double charter in Shanghai—for the Mandarin and the Morning Star—to use after I changed one into the other. I had spars aboard and spare stuff—"

A gasp of amazement went up from Ships Bottom. But Jack Carney was not bothering with charters, real or crooked. He turned burning eyes on the skipper that made him shrink back. "Now tell 'em," he said, "how we come to part company off Barneget,—you an' me and the Mandarin!"

"Why, you didn't fit in with that Chink scheme, and you knew too much to be safe aboard," the skipper said. "Anyway, we went off and left you. I made a mistake there," Cane said; "like I did when I left that Chinees figurehead behind. The crew took him for a sort of joss. They wouldn't work the ship this last trip, when the storm came up. Thought it was the old Mandarin layin' for them, I suppose. You saw the finish of it yourself."

AS it happened, neither Ships Bottom nor the skipper of the Mandarin realized the full significance of Carney's ship of sand until after the coming of the Inspector and certain high dignitaries in the department.

"I don't know about that sailors' superstition of a ship coming back to where she was wrecked, or that sand ship calling her in," the Inspector said; "but I do know everything worked out the way Carney said, and from the moment he started work here on the beach she gives him a claim for salvage. Furthermore, she's responsible for a call from the underwriters, who count him in on the salvage for a ship that was never lost, and was paid for. If she doesn't belong to Carney, I don't know who that Mandarin ship does belong to—and he's got a claim on the original cargo too. But of course that's a matter he will have to take up with the interested parties."

There was one party in interest whom Jack Carney thought more of than all the rest. Taking it by and large, when that ship of sand once got down to business it did some pretty effective calling—and among ships and other things came a certain pretty, loyal girl of Barneget.

"An' if you call that just silly sailors' superstition," Carney said to the world at large, "I say sailors has got good solid sense!"

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Oriental sailors (like the Mandarin's crew) believe that a ship's figurehead is her soul: once lost, she blindly blunders about until it is found. From this originated the superstition of deep-water sailormen that a ship, particularly if wilfully wrecked, will ultimately forgoth at the place where she was lost, or went to pieces. If her original numbered and fitted parts are cut or cast away, the saved hull will surely come home to them in time, mysteriously "called" by the severed members—as suggested by Welsh's parallel of the soldier with the buried limbs, and becalmed ships "sneaking together at sea," a fact mistakenly attributed by scientists to hydrographic gravitation.



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